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THE PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS

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AT THE TWENTY-FIRST ANNUAL MEETING OF THE
ASSOCIATION, HELD AT THE UNIVERSITY
OF MICHIGAN.

BY GEORGE HEMPL.

THE TEACHER OF ENGLISH AND HIS ATTITUDE
TOWARD HIS SUBJECT.

What I intend to say to you this evening is not the sort of thing we look for in a presidential address. I am well aware of this and pray that you will grant me your indulgence. I have chosen my subject and the manner of my address partly because I believe the matter to be one of considerable importance, and partly because of special considerations. This meeting, more than the others of our session, is a public meeting and what is here said has least of all the nature of a conference in which we exchange views and present technical papers. Here we in a way speak to the outside world. There is a certain popular deference for the opinions held by those who have made special study of languages, and many things are taught in the schools on the supposition that they have the sanction and support of philologists. It is therefore proper that we should now and then give expression to the present belief of students of language, and not permit extracts from old-time confessions of philological faith to pass unchallenged. I do not presume to speak for all the members of this Association, but I am satisfied that the position that I assume is, in general, that of most enlightened scholars of the present time. Moreover, this happens to be the occasion of the

meeting of the State Teachers Association in Ann Arbor and I am therefore tempted to take advantage of the opportunity thus afforded me to reach some of the teachers of the State as well as my colleagues from other universities and my friends here in Ann Arbor.

The attitude assumed toward the mother tongue by the average teacher of English is based on antiquated and mistaken conceptions of the nature of language and the function of the teacher of English. These mistaken conceptions are not entertained by teachers only but are shared by the average educated man and woman. We have all been at school and have been taught to believe that the teacher's attitude is right. Later our younger brothers and sisters were taught in this way, and now our children are having the same experience. What wonder if people generally take it for granted that this is the right way, or the only way? Now and then doubts arise and one or another individual rebels. But the objections are not clearly formulated, and business concerns, or family cares, or social duties crowd such reformatory ideas from the mind, and when they recur to one at a subsequent time, he finds it easier to leave things alone and conform. What I am attacking is, therefore, the attitude that is assumed toward English, not only by the average teacher but also by the average person of education. Perhaps a better title for my paper would be *The Usual Attitude Assumed toward the Mother Tongue*.

What is the usual attitude assumed toward the mother tongue? It is not easy to define, for it is not one consistent thing. It is something that shifts and is now one thing and now something a little different. This is due to the fact that the underlying ideas or impressions of language and of the mother tongue and of the function of the teacher are picked up by the average educated person at different times, in different places, and under different circumstances; and

no particular effort is made to coördinate them or bring them into harmony. I shall therefore make no elaborate attempt to analyse the usual attitude toward the mother tongue, but shall content myself with recalling to the mind certain phases of it, such as will answer my purpose.

In the first place, language is popularly regarded as something primarily in books, something that is generally printed, less often written, and of which spoken language is only a practical application. The mind goes back to the classic writers of English and we have a sort of notion that they *made* the English language as they sat in their studies and wrote learned books or tragedies or lolled on moonlit banks and spun their verses. We fancy that Chaucer was the father of modern English and that his successors were its nurses and teachers. In other words, language and literature are confounded, and when the English language is spoken of, it is usually the printed English language that is in mind. If a sort of recognition is accorded spoken speech, it is under some such patronizing designation as "colloquial." That the language of books is *the* language seems not to be questioned. Spoken speech is appreciated only in proportion as it approaches the written language, and we are told of this or that person whose language was so beautiful that it sounded almost like a book. Visions of such people pass through our minds and we try to localize them, but generally without success.

Still,—and here is another somewhat contradictory phase of the teacher's attitude toward the mother tongue—we are taught that, while *we* speak a careless and generally reprehensible English, the language is not so spoken elsewhere, at least not by educated and cultivated people. There even are places where it is quite generally spoken to perfection. When we ask for specific localities, our champion of the pure article linguistic generally makes a hesitating suggestion

of Boston, or the first families of Virginia—only to add that most Bostonians whom he has met talked very affectedly, and Virginians had such a funny way of speaking almost like darkies. Sometimes he crosses the sea and designates England as the blessed isle of English pure and undefiled. But almost immediately after, he confesses that the English accent always reminded him of the Irishman's brogue,—and he never could quite understand why the English used the vulgar pronunciation *et*¹ for *ate*, and sounded *been* and *again* *bîn* and *ægên*, just as children do when learning to read,—why they called pitchers jugs, and talked of some things as being different *to* others,—and why they spoke of bou'quets of flowers and said *yêa* for *your*, and a lot of other strange things. But, illusive and uncertain as its habitat may be, that there is a perfect or standard way of speaking English somewhere or other is not questioned, and we are taught that it is our duty to strive to acquire it. Our guides in this are again books, the grammar, the dictionary, and, for superior souls, the "Works" of such writers as Richard Grant White. We are advised to consult these diligently and whenever we find that our usage does not accord with that which they teach, we must change it and improve every opportunity to practise ourselves in the correct form.

A frequent element in the usual conception of English is the notion that the language stands in great danger of corruption and deterioration, and that the united efforts of all lovers of the mother tongue are needed to preserve it. As a result, all changes in meaning, in construction, or in pronunciation are tabooed as base innovations, and reference is made to the classics of the past to prove what the correct form is. "Correct," "right," "wrong," "grammatical," "ungrammatical," "authority," "Webster's Dictionary,"—these are the everyday words of the school-room. Our children bring

¹ For the phonetic alphabet employed, see page liii.

them home and repeat them at the dinner-table ; and high-school pupils carry them with them when they go to the university. Even junior students will come up to the instructor's desk and ask, as tho a matter of the greatest importance : " Professor, which is correct, il'lustrate or illus'trate ? " or " Professor, don't you regard Webster's dictionary as the standard ? " A few days ago a graduate student from some other institution said to me : " It isn't correct to speak of a grammatical error is it ? " I betrayed my surprise and she continued, evidently quoting from a former teacher : " You see, if it is grammatical, it would be right, and so it couldn't be an error. " This is the sort of thing that is going on in very many, I believe in most of our public schools, in many of our normal schools, and in a goodly number of our colleges. The teacher is constantly picking up in the speech of his pupils petty points which seem to him to be ungrammatical or incorrect. Instead of teaching them to respect and use their mother tongue, he leads them to distrust it, and be afraid of using it for fear it might not accord with the speech of books or with somebody else's mother tongue.

I have said that language is thought of as primarily a written thing, a thing that grows in the study of the learned man and the lounging place of the inspired poet. But this is entirely erroneous. The truth is that real speech is spoken speech. Writing and printing are not speech. They are simply devices by means of which men make for themselves or for others a picture of language, in order that they may preserve it or convey it to a distance—just as they do with a portrait. The picture thus obtained is a very imperfect one ; it gives us only a skeleton of what is really said. Moreover, it is invariably an old one, which the language has long outgrown. In the case of some languages, for example English, so far as pronunciation is concerned the printed form is a picture not of the language of to-day but of that of five

hundred years ago. It is as tho we were to pass off the picture of one of our great grandmothers as a portrait of ourselves. Instead of looking upon book-English as a model and trying to speak like the dictionary, we should rather bend our energies toward making the printed form of language a truer picture of the spoken speech, that is, do what we can toward introducing some rational revision of our antiquated spelling. This is something that can be changed by human effort. Speech itself can not. Do what we please, the language goes on in obedience to forces that are beyond our control. As I have said, real language is that which is spoken and heard—that which the brain makes to leap with marvellous agility from the tongue and the lips and which is received and transmitted by the vibrating tympanum and gathered up from the nerves of the ears to be transformed into thought in the brain of the listener. It is not the carefully moulded phrase of the poet or the secluded scholar writing slowly at his desk, nor is it the elegantly mouthed utterance of the elocutionist on the public platform. These forms of speech exist, but they are hothouse plants, not the natural growth of the country in which they are on exhibition. They perish as they bloom, or, if susceptible of preservation, are laid away on the shelves of libraries, like pressed flowers in an herbarium, to be looked at now and then by the student or a curious visitor. But so far as influencing the great outside world of speech is concerned, they are truly dead. Men, women, and children rise in the morning, go about their work or play, and return wearied at night, and the vast majority of them know no more of these mummy words and sentences than they do of the dead in the churchyard. What they themselves hear, see, and feel, what they do or strive to do, these things give shape to their thoughts and speed the constant train of words along the tongue and lips. For the average human being, many hun-

dred times as much speech comes to the brain thru the ears as comes thru the eyes. And by all odds the most common and most important form of spoken speech is that which we use from hour to hour in speaking to one another, whether it be at home, on the playground, or in our places of business. It is the conditions that prevail here that determine the future of the language, not the considerations that present themselves when one sits quietly in his study and prepares a set speech or writes a book.

In other words, language is one of the manifestations of human activity and as such is dependent upon the conditions under which men live. As these vary, human speech varies. The greatest factor in linguistic conditions is climate. This determines temperament, character, and mental energy, and thru these the character of one's speech. So slight a modification of temperament as will lead a community to speak more rapidly or more energetically is likely to be the cause of the most far-reaching changes in the speech of that community. Next to climate as a factor controlling linguistic development, is the character of one's life, as determined by one's trade or one's station. But this is less important than climate and less far-reaching.

Partly because of the varied and changing conditions under which men live, partly because of the nature of the human mind and the processes by which each new generation learns to speak, human speech is in a state of constant change. No fact in linguistics is better established than the fact of the instability of speech. But it is not only constantly changing, it changes more rapidly in some places and in some classes of society than in others, and it changes differently in different places and different classes of society. Of course there is constant influence of one form upon another, and extreme divergence is thus kept in check. Still it remains true that not only is there no one established usage—there

can not be any. On many points there is agreement, but as to many there is diversity of usage. If we had to deal with a very small area and with people all living practically the same life, we might have a certain uniformity of speech usage. But when we consider the conditions under which language life normally goes on, we see that speech can not be uniform even in restricted areas. And when a language, like the English, extends over the face of the globe and is spoken in all climes, its differentiation into varieties is a matter of course.

Usage in speech is very much like usage in other human concerns. For the moment let us liken it to deportment or etiquette. Manners are not the same in all countries nor among all classes of people in any one country. Nor are such things fixed. They change from time to time as fashions change. In certain circles of society there is more time and opportunity for the cultivation of manners, and they therefore here receive a higher development and become characteristic of these classes. Others, wishing to enter the higher circles, must conform or be regarded as interlopers. Aware of this, they resort to books on etiquette and study the reports there given of the ways of the world of society. The benefits of such study, however, are restricted, and no clodhopper can be turned into a gentleman by even the best of books on etiquette. And so it is with speech. Dictionaries and grammars, so far as they are authorities on usage, are but books of etiquette of limited scope. No amount of study of them will purify the speech of one who from childhood has heard and used mostly vulgar speech. And the man or woman who is constantly striving to speak like the grammar and pronounce like the dictionary may justly be classed with the person who is constantly trying to regulate his conduct by the rules of books on etiquette. In both cases we are warranted in suspecting that we have to do with

an upstart, if not with a prig. In one important particular, dictionaries and grammars are not even as good as books on etiquette. The authors and publishers of the latter generally strive to keep them up to date, and pride themselves on giving the most recent reports of present usage. Grammars and dictionaries, on the other hand, are professedly conservative. Instead of reporting what is usage to-day, they frown upon it, and take pride in basing their statements upon the authority of the venerable names of the eighteenth or early nineteenth centuries. That recent dictionaries, especially those published in England, have improved in this matter, must not be overlooked; still, it remains true that, except for the introduction of new words and pictures, our dictionaries are fifty years behind the times, and most of our grammars still teach the English of a hundred years ago. It thus comes about that teachers who have no other guide to what is good usage and lack confidence in their own observation and judgment, refuse to acknowledge the usage of the present, and admit it only years after, when the dictionaries and grammars have granted it a belated recognition. Often, by that time, a new shift has taken place and the new usage is again ignored or impugned.

It may be said, and with justice, that in the world of to-day, and especially in America, there is a constant rising from one class to another; that many people whose early associations are crude or vulgar pass up and may become leaders in business or politics, in art or in science. This is very true, and it is also true that it is a part of the duty of American teachers to lend their charges a helping hand, and teach them better habits and manners and higher ideals. There can be no doubt that under manners we must include speech. Let me not be misunderstood. The teacher should certainly have a care for the pupil's pronunciation and use of words. I am not finding fault with that, but with the

way in which it is done and the extent to which it is carried. There are forms of English that are acceptable in no circle of good society, and it is the duty of the teacher in some discreet way to call the attention of his pupils to these, just as he would to vulgarisms they may betray in manners, or to the dirt on their hands or clothes. As I have said, the average teacher does not understand the nature of language and has not the right conception of what he should do. He does not consider what is possible and what impossible, what is advisable and what unnecessary, what is important and what only distracts or irritates.

The teacher must never forget that the school-days of the child are few, and that there is much, very much, to be taught. We need not compare English with other subjects. In English itself there is more to teach than can easily be taught well. It is necessary that no time be wasted on minor matters. By all odds the most important part of the task of the teacher of English is to train his pupils to express themselves clearly and effectively. But what we call teaching to write clearly and effectively is, after all, not that, but teaching to think clearly and logically and to marshal one's thoughts effectively. Our thoughts do not pop out distinct and clear from the start. In most cases we approach a new subject of thought much as we approach an object in a fog. At first there is obscurity and little distinctness, and it is only as we get nearer and concentrate our attention that things take shape and definiteness of character. The badly written sentence usually betrays the fact that the writer has not thought his subject out well. He is still in the maze, and what he writes reflects the obscurity and confusion of his thinking. To correct this is surely a long and arduous task and needs all the time and effort that the teacher of English can spare for it. The power to think out his thoughts and cast them into such linguistic form as will

convey them quickly and forcibly to the minds of others will be of great and lasting value to every one, wherever his lot may fall. But whether he says "I hope always to remember" or "I hope to always remember," "It's I" or "It's me," "slower" or "more slowly," "papa'" or "pa'pa," "contrac'tor" or "con'tractor," "contents'" or "con'tents," "Latin" or "Lat'n," "fore'ead" or "fore-head," "Gød" or "Göd" or "Gôd," is comparatively immaterial. In his zeal for the niceties of articulation and grammar, the average teacher loses sight of the larger and nobler part of his task. He seeks after the word and misses the spirit and the life, he gives his pupil the shell and lets the kernel fall by the wayside.

We have seen that language is constantly changing and varies from place to place. It is therefore folly to condemn a usage for the simple reason that it is younger than some other usage. The construction *is being*, for example in the sentence "The prisoner is being led to the gallows," is probably not over two hundred years old. Still, it filled a want that had arisen because of other shifts in the language. One may decline to avail himself of it, but no teacher has the right to waste time teaching children that it is to be avoided. A construction that is employed by a large body of good writers should not be stamped as un-English, even if there are those who prefer another. The so-called split infinitive is a case in point. The excellent tendency to place modifiers like *only* and *constantly* just before the words they modify has led to sentences like "He hoped to only tease them a little," which is certainly less ambiguous than "He hoped only to tease them a little," and could not be replaced by "He hoped to tease only them a little." It will be worth our while to consider a few of the matters of usage upon which much precious time is wasted in our schools.

We are told that most Americans have the vulgar habit of flattening the vowel in words like *class*, *after*, *path*, *calf*, etc.

It is true that most Americans pronounce *pass*, *laugh*, *calf*, and the like, with â, a prolonged form of the vowel in *pat*, but in so doing they have not flattened the vowel or in any way changed the language. It is the pronunciation pâs, lâf, kâf, that is the younger or intruding one, and those who say pâs and lâf, instead of "abusing" the language, have simply been guilty of preserving it unchanged. It is human nature to look upon such things differently according as *we* are involved or somebody else. Because the native of Southern England and the Bostonian have changed bâp into bôp, they regard bâp as provincial; as they and we have changed *are* (which was formerly pronounced âr, to rime with *care*) into ôr, we smile at âr as very old fashioned; but both they and we regard the corresponding change of *there* (ðâr) into *thar* (ðôr) as vulgar in the extreme. I may be permitted to quote one of these prejudiced notions from the pages of Richard Grant White:—"It may here be pertinently remarked that the pronunciation of *a* in such words as *glass*, *last*, *father*, and *pastor* is a test of high culture . . . The full, free, unconscious utterance of the broad *ah* sound of *a* is the surest indication in speech of social culture which began at the cradle." (*Words and Their Uses*, p. 62.) It takes but a moment's reflection to perceive that this usage is a matter of geographical situation and not of the class of society to which one belongs. In the isolated cases where it distinguishes the individual, it generally betrays would-be culture of the most recent and superficial character. We must not forget the young man who took pride in informing his friends that it was his daily habit to take a bôp in a porcelain bôptub. The change of the â in *past*, etc., in the direction of ô has made greatest headway in England, tho many different degrees of the shift are there noticeable. In this country the change began very early in Virginia, but the new vowel has been nearly crowded out again. Eastern New England also suffered the shift to a

decided degree, but here too $\hat{a}$ is now losing ground, even in Boston itself. The vast majority of English-speaking people still employ in these words a vowel ($\hat{a}$) identical with that in *cat*, but more prolonged, or a vowel ($\hat{a}$) intermediate between this and the vowel ($\hat{a}$) in *father*. The attempt to make all American children say *pâst* and *lâf* is unwarranted and hopelessly futile. It is another case of the effort to make the tail wag the dog.

A much ridden hobby of the schools of a large part of our country is the attempt to force pupils to pronounce *dog* *dâg*, *lost* *lâst*, *cross* *krâs*, *horrid* *hârid*, and the like. The question is one of the sound of "short o." This is perhaps the most perplexing thing for the student of Modern English orthoepy. The truth is that in present English, short *o* is breaking up into various vowels, differing according to the character of the neighboring consonants. This is particularly true of American English. The old short *o* is maintained under certain conditions in Eastern New England, but in most parts of the United States it has become a more or less long $\hat{a}$ (as in *ah*!) or a more or less long $\hat{o}$ (as in *or*); thus the older *en* has become $\hat{a}n$ or $\hat{o}n$, the older *feg* has become *fâg* or *fêg*, but practically everywhere *lêst* and *krês* (*cross*) have become *lêst* and *krês*, and *dêg* has become *dêg*, while on the other hand *het* has become *hat* or *hât*, and *pêd* has become *pad* or *pâd*. The difficulty of the matter lies in the fact that the vowel is developing differently in different parts of the English-speaking world, and in each part differently according to the character of the neighboring consonants. No one has yet determined just how the matter lies. The dictionaries naturally shirk the difficulty by continuing to mark all the vowels alike, that is, with $\hat{o}$. At the bottom of the page this character is illustrated by a key word, generally *odd* or *not*. As most Americans pronounce *not* with an $\hat{a}$ -sound, they infer that this is the standard "short o," and that the vowel in *lost*, *dog*, etc., should be so

sounded. If teachers, they therefore proceed to instruct their pupils to say *lâst* and *dâg*, and imagine they are doing a very proper thing. When we consider that the pronunciation *â* in *fog*, *hog*, *stock*, *lock*, etc., is nothing more than one of the various American developments of the true short *o*, we can realize how unwarranted we are in holding it up as *the* sound. And when we learn that the despised *aw*-like sound of *dôg*, *lôst*, *hêrid*, is really nearer to the true short *o* than the *â* heard generally in *odd* and *hot* and, in most of the North, in *fog*, *hog*, etc., the absurdity of the proceeding of teaching pupils to say *dâg*, *lâst*, *hârid*, and the like, is sufficiently manifest.

One of the strangest prejudices is that entertained by many teachers against the innocent word *got*. This doubtless arises from the notion that *I've got* in the sense of 'I have' or 'I possess,' arose by adding an unnecessary *got* to *I have*. In fact, the development of *I've got* from the idea 'I have obtained' to that of 'I possess' is a very natural and normal one, and is the process by which all the preterit-present verbs of the various Indo-European languages came into existence. The usage extends wherever the English language is spoken and long ago vindicated its right to be. While *I have* in this sense holds its own in books and lingers in elevated speech, it sounds rather tame in normal spoken speech, and has too little vitality to assert itself. But the purists try to resuscitate it, and carry on a vigorous campaign against its robust rival *I've got*. In so doing, they miss the real point of their objection to *got*, and fight it under any and all circumstances, advising pupils always to substitute *obtain*, *acquire*, or some other word, but not to use *got* if they can possibly avoid it. Not long ago, my little girl came home from school with tears in her eyes: she had been marked down because she had employed in an essay the expression "I got home late that night." Poor child! And poor English language!

Among the earliest memories of your school life was your surprise on being told not to say "Can I go?" but "May I go?" With an attempt at being witty, the teacher would sometimes say "You *can* go, but you *may not*!" You were mystified at first and could not make out whether permission was being withheld or doubt expressed as to what you would ultimately do. But you soon discovered that when you wanted to say *can't*, it was wise to say *mayn't*. "Mayn't I go now?"—such was the wretched final appeal of the poor little miscreant who had been kept after school half an hour and then five minutes more for having said "Can't I go now?" Would that teacher's heart melt a bit if she were informed that *mayn't* is no longer in good use in this country, except as school-teachers manufacture it from day to day in their little kingdoms? In Great Britain it lingers locally, but there too its use is decidedly on the wane. Of all shifting things, none are more shifting than the meanings or values of the so-called modal auxiliaries. No one of them now means what it used to mean. *May* and *might* started out with the meaning 'to have the might or power (to do so and so),' but they have left this meaning behind and now denote possibility or permission. *Can* once meant 'to know how,' being of the same root as *ken* and *know*, but in time it took the place of *may* and denoted power. Now it is crowding *may* again and is undergoing the shift that *may* underwent when it passed from the idea of power to that of permission. In the sense of 'be allowed,' it has already usurped the place of *may* before a negative and is pressing it close in other positions. The sentence "He may not do it" means that it is possible that he will not do it, and would no longer be understood to mean that he is not allowed to do it. Similarly, we still say "It may be," but in the negative "It can't be."

Perhaps the most far-reaching of the school fads is the effort to make pupils distinctly articulate unstressed syllables, as, for example, in the following words: *moment*, *sentence*,

goodness, empress, united, damage, orange, pliant, lion, orator, educator, nature, literature, christianity, particular, etc., and to restore the lost vowel in such words as *every, history class*, etc. There can be no doubt that the teachers and school superintendents that insist on teaching such pronunciations believe that they are in the right and are doing what philologists would uphold. But it is quack philologists only that have ever recommended such a course. The student of the history of English speech knows that the greatest factor in the development of the language has been the heavy stress placed upon the chief syllable of a word, and that this heavy stress has as its natural accompaniment a corresponding weakness of stress on the neighboring syllables. Such weakness of stress leads to the obscuration of the vowel and often to its entire loss, as well as to the loss of certain consonants. This weakening of unstressed vowels and consonants began long before the recorded history of the Germanic race, and resulted in the disappearance of whole syllables in hundreds of words—before a line of Anglo-Saxon had been committed to parchment! Ever since, the same tendency has shown itself, and, one after another, exposed syllables succumb. Behind it all lies the habit of forceful utterance natural to the Germanic people, a racial characteristic that will not change until the race changes. For school teachers or professors to presume to stand in its way and hold up their weak hands to stop its progress is as vain as it is arrogant. The story of the English language has been the story of change and the condemnation of change; but while the former has gone on relentlessly, the latter has shifted its point of attack from generation to generation. The purist of two hundred years ago regarded as rank degeneration the forms of speech that were then coming in, the same that now have for us the pleasant flavor of good old usage. And much of that which the purist of to-day is decrying as upstart English, may depend upon the loyal support of the purist of the

twenty-first century. The English language is not degenerating. Far from it; it is constantly changing and is growing rapidly, always adapting itself to its new environment and proving itself a worthy exponent of the thoughts and deeds of the men who speak it.

But it may be asked, What is a teacher to do? How much shall he try to accomplish and how much shall he let go? Where shall he draw the line? These questions cannot be answered in brief. A course of serious study of the nature and development of the English language would go far toward answering them. Still, I can say a few things that may be of practical value to the teacher who is so situated that he cannot take up such study. If of any word there are two or more pronunciations in recognized use and one of these is natural to him, I should advise him to continue to employ it. If he prefers to change it for some other recognized pronunciation, that is a private matter and he has no right to force others to change with him. Any pronunciation that is tolerated by one of the leading dictionaries is good enough for any schoolboy. If what a child is taught not to say, he hears said by reputable speakers and reads in good books, he either gets a false idea of men of letters or learns to discredit what is taught him at school and, finding much of it not true to the facts, is inclined to disregard it all. No teacher is warranted in trying to get his pupils to speak the English of another part of the English-speaking world. Because the vowel in *past*, *after*, *path*, etc., has come to be like that in *father* in Southern England and a small part of our Atlantic seaboard, that is no reason why the rest of the English-speaking world should be taught to be ashamed of its usage and try to change it. In the second place, if there has arisen with reference to a matter of pronunciation, construction, or word-order, a serious discussion among grammarians, that very fact is proof enough that each side has considerable strength, and where doctors disagree, it

is presumptuous for a school-teacher to decide. He should tolerate both usages. The schoolroom is not the place to discuss points of disputed usage. If the teacher will concentrate his attention upon correcting in the child's speech that which would be objectionable anywhere, he will find that he has a large enough task. Finally, even among desirable things, choice must be made of the more important, and the less important must be neglected. Considering how much is to be done in the short period of school life, if a teacher has reason to believe that what he is trying to teach his pupils the majority of them will not retain after their school days are over, it is his business to set about finding something to teach those pupils that they will retain and that will be of some profit to them and the world that they are to live in. In other words, old-time petty verbal criticism must be laid aside, and attention must be concentrated upon what is unquestionably essential to good usage.

As regards his own usage, the teacher may well practise the doctrine of refraining. I know a professor of English literature who takes great pains to say *litæra'tyûr*, but seems quite unaware of the fact that *windø* and *felø* are not the usual forms of *window* and *fellow*. I know a professor of medicine who has acquired '*ither* and *n'ither* and *papa*', but still talks of his *clenics*. When I was at school, dictionaries and teachers tried to make us distinguish the nouns *survey*, *cement*, *rise*, and *grease* from the verbs *survey*, *cement*, *rise*, and *grease*, forsooth because similar distinctions are made in *record*, *conflict*, etc. and in *use*, *excuse*, and the like. This was, of course, no reason at all, as there are many things to consider besides such superficial parallelisms. To-day the devotee of the dictionary will find that he may say with impunity either *the sur'vey* or *the survey'* and sound the verb *grease* with an *s* or a *z*, the former being the original and not an intruder, and that, as to the other words, he had better return to his natural habit and sound them alike, whether

noun or verb. It would be interesting to know if any of those who painfully trained themselves to sound an *s* rather than a *z* in *The Rise and Fall of the Roman Empire* ever got themselves to do the same in *sunrise*. In general, tinkering with language is dangerous business. One must remember that what he has said all his life is far more likely to be right than wrong. There is almost sure to be good linguistic history behind it, and he should not give it up without cause. If he has been brought up in a normal English-speaking community, he should have respect for his natural speech, and should yield it for other speech only for good reason. At the same time, each one of us and, above all, the teacher of English should cultivate a spirit of toleration for the usage of others. It is no sign of education or of breadth of culture to be finding things to criticise in the speech of others. He is the real provincial who judges all by his own practice or the tenets of his teacher, and does not know that what may be strange or antique or vulgar to him may be the best of usage in other linguistic territory.

One who, without having learned the trade, sets himself up as language-tinker is very likely to find imaginary flaws and to undo what needs no mending. The word *restive*, which came to us through the French from Latin *restāre*, 'resist,' has for hundreds of years meant 'refractory,' 'inclined to resist control.' The word has naturally been much applied to horses, and, according to the nature of the control exercised, has taken on one or the other of two opposite meanings: 'unwilling to go,' and 'unwilling to stand still.' In both cases it was naturally associated with the native English word *rest* (with which it has etymologically nothing whatever to do), and was in the one case supposed to mean 'inclined to rest' and in the other 'restless.' The former meaning was the weaker and has yielded entirely to the latter. And now come over-wise critics, who by accident have run upon the obsolete meaning of the word, and tell us

that *restive* really means 'lazy' and that a restive horse is one that wants to rest and by no means a nervous horse that wants to go, as we, in our ignorance, have all along supposed. Of course, in such cases, the ignorance is all on the side of the critic. But even if it were not, the case would not be different. The meaning of a word may change to any extent and the change may be due to misunderstanding or downright ignorance; the fact remains that, if the meaning has changed, it has changed, and that is all there is to it. *Impertinent* once meant 'not pertinent,' 'irrelevant,' and was applied to remarks, not to the person who made them. It now means 'insolent,' and is applied either to remarks or to the person uttering them. To say that 'A person can no more be impertinent than he can be irrelevant or disconnected' may be funny, but it is neither wise nor true. The meaning of a word is not what we find printed after it in a dictionary, but the idea it arouses in the mind when it is heard. Language does not exist in order to accord with dictionaries and grammars, but in order to convey thought, and that quickly and clearly. What a fool I should be if I used a word knowing that it would suggest to my hearers not my idea but some other idea. All the dictionaries and learned citations in the world would make my case no better. There are many things in speech that are irregular or peculiar when we examine them closely, but in speaking we do not examine them closely, and so long as they convey our ideas satisfactorily, there is no need of dissecting them or trying to perform surgical operations on them. When I tell you that a child came tumbling down stairs head over heels, you know exactly what I mean. Perhaps it would be more logical to say "heels over head," and, if we were getting up one of those grown folks' toys, an artificial language, we might say "heels over head" or something of that kind in it. But in English we say "head over heels," and that's all. I may say "The poor woman has no servant and has to do her own

work." Of course that is very illogical, for I certainly do not mean to imply that things would be better if she did her neighbor's work. But the expression "does her own work" conveys to my listener's mind just the idea I have in mind, and as its form does not attract the attention of one English-speaking person in a million, it is good English.

The chief trouble with the teaching of English is the fact that so many of the teachers are unfit to give instruction in the subject. An unkind critic has said that the average teacher of English in our high schools is a lady who is on the teaching staff because local forces keep her there, and who is teaching English because she is known to be unable to teach anything else. This is, of course, not generally true, but the pity is that it is very often true. The remedy lies, on the one hand, in the general improvement of the general educational conditions of the country, and, on the other hand, in the proper training of those who are to be teachers of English and in the improvement of those already teaching the mother tongue. It is not my business to consider the general improvement of our schools, but I may say a few words as to the preparation of prospective teachers of English and the improvement of the old teachers. The student who expects to give instruction in English should have not only a systematic training in the history of his own language, but also a knowledge of the life and growth of language in general. To acquire the former it would be well for him to know Old and Middle English, but he need not be a profound student of either. He certainly does not want that dead and dry study of the older language that often masquerades under the name of "English Philology" and has already surrounded these words with associations anything but lovely. He who would be a good teacher of English does however need a superficial acquaintance with the general history of the language. He should know what sort of a speech it was when his remote ancestors sailed from

the shores of Denmark and Germany, and, landing on the British coast, established themselves in the island they were destined to make famous. Then he must know how this language changed because of the forces latent in it and because of the influences to which it was subjected from without. And all this must not be separated from the story of the life of the people and the state. To understand the nature of language he must study it not only from books, but as a living phenomenon. He must listen to the speech of those about him and compare it with that of those from a distance; in other words, he must make a study of the various forms of English and strive to discover the causes of their diversities and their historical relations to one another. I am not speaking as the enthusiastic specialist when I say that such study of English is not only very instructive, but full of interest and possessed of a peculiar charm. The remaking of old teachers is much harder than the making of new ones. Some can take a leave of absence, and pursue special courses at college. Some can never be improved, no matter what they do. Still, there are thousands of able but misguided teachers of English who must stick to their daily routine but who would welcome the truth and be good preachers of it. To reach them we must encourage those among us who have not only learning but also the gift of fine and forcible expression to devote a part of their precious time to the enlightening of their humble fellow workers. I am thinking of such men as Furnivall, Lounsbury, Brander Matthews, Kittredge, and a few others, who, like Whitney at an earlier day, have not hesitated to expose conventional ignorance and bigotry and to tell the simple truth as to speech in general and English in particular. What we need is more such common sense essays and their more general diffusion among the school teachers of our land.

The phonetic alphabet employed above (pages xxxiv–xliv, etc.) is that recommended in a Report of a Joint Committee representing the National Educational Association, the American Philological Association, and the Modern Language Association, of which Professor Calvin Thomas of Columbia University is the chairman. The following may serve as a key :—

û pû	<i>pooh</i>	ə əbaut	<i>about</i>	î bî	<i>bee</i>
u puʃ	<i>push</i>	û fûr	<i>fur</i>	i bit	<i>bit</i>
ô pôp	<i>pope</i>	u hut	<i>hut</i>	ê bé	<i>bay</i>
o poetik	<i>poetic</i>	â ârt	<i>art</i>	e bet	<i>bet</i>
ə 'gəst	<i>August</i>	a artistik	<i>artistic</i>	â bâr	<i>bare</i>
ə egust'	<i>august</i>	â lâst	<i>last</i>	a bat	<i>bat</i>
b bet	<i>bet</i>	m met	<i>met</i>	ð ðis	<i>this</i>
p pet	<i>pet</i>	n net	<i>net</i>	þ þin	<i>thin</i>
d din	<i>din</i>	ŋ in̩k	<i>ink</i>	z zîl	<i>zeal</i>
t tin	<i>tin</i>			s sîl	<i>seal</i>
g gôld	<i>gold</i>	h hat	<i>hat</i>	ʒ pleʒər	<i>pleasure</i>
k kôld	<i>cold</i>			ʃ ʃî	<i>she</i>
		w wêl	<i>wail</i>	y yî	<i>ye</i>
l let	<i>let</i>	v vêl	<i>veil</i>		
r red	<i>red</i>	f fêl	<i>fail</i>	For j, ɛ, see below.	

hai *high*, hau *how*, haus *house*, hû *who*, hwit *whit*, hyûmən *human*, yâr *your*, pyûr *pure*, vois *voice*, bei *boy*, sin̩ *sing*, lɔŋ *long*, lɔŋgər *longer*, fāðər *father*, ɒnər *honor*, begər *beggar*, hûr *her*, sûr *sir*, fûr *sure*, azər *azure*, siti *city*, kiti *kitty*, fetʃ *fetch*, katʃ *catch*, tʃɜrtʃ *church*, dʒɔi *joy*, dʒɜrdʒ *George* (also fɛɛ, kæɛ, ɔʊrɛ, ʒɔi, ʒɜrj, etc.).